

**MINUTES from 12/9/14 special meeting of Arlington Commission
on Arts & Culture (ACAC)with ATED representative, re
CULTURAL DISTRICT DESIGNATION PLANNING**

Meeting held at 26 Woodland Street, Arlington, MA
7 pm

ATTENDING:

For ACAC: Adria Arch, Stephanie Marlin-Curiel, Jonathan Hyde, Barbara Costa
For ATED: Joe Curro

Discussion of research about other communities with Cultural District designations.

Information from Meri Jenkins of Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) is still preliminary as Cultural Districts have only been in place since 2011. From 17 (out of current 27) cultural districts reporting:

- 72 new businesses opened in the districts, and a dozen or so closed.
- The districts reported an average increase in visitation of 10.6%.
- 55 organizations joined the districts as partners.
- The districts raised more than \$550,000 -- an average of \$33,00 per district. This was not MCC funds.

Joe reported on conversation with Ezra Glenn of MIT Department of Urban Planning (*consultant to MCC on Cultural Districts, including Orleans*), who is well acquainted with Arlington:

- theater study and other info is in place in Arlington already
- data of numbers of people who pass by on bike trail is already available
- an assessment of economic impact on arts should also consider impact on the arts/artists. Mass Cultural Council likes to see how artists earn
- Adams Grant might be better to do first; it's flexible and can get planning money for Cultural District designation. Intention to have Cultural District can leverage the plan, similar amount of effort. Goal for an Adams Grant could be to develop Cultural District and Cultural Plan.
- MCC prefers districts to have unique spin, which is why Boston's Literary District was good. Emphasize what you do well in your community.
- Could envision extending a district from Arlington Center to the Fox Library if you tie it together; this is probably the outer bounds of the size that could be considered, if we can make the case that it's walkable.
- MCC broadly defines creative endeavors to include graphic design, computer programming!

Noted: The biggest challenge is running the district, more than applying for it. Many get through it but then lose steam.

ACAC is the advocate for arts & culture in Arlington, help various groups talk to each other, to avoid duplicating efforts, etc – need to bring them together, to work together on Cultural District designation as a common goal, which is for Arlington to be a cultural destination. Builds audiences, leverages funding. ACAC to facilitate by bringing groups together but not to run the Cultural District designation process.

Discussion of possible participants in a working group on Cultural District designation, to be contacted by members of our group. To include representatives from Robbins Library, ACA, Arlington Friends of the Drama, Arlington Historical Society/Smith Museum – Jason Russell House/Whittemore Robbins House, Regent Theater, Arlington International Film Festival, Arlington Chamber of Commerce, and more. Joe will mention this to members of Arlington Business District.

The Board of Selectmen (BoS) will need to sign the application so we will inform them of our intentions in the presentation of the Annual Report.

[END]